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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4175

INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000157

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA

ALSO FOR PM/FO AND PM/WRA-DAVID DIAZ, SHO MORIMOTO AND

STEPHANIE PICO

IO/PDAS WARLICK, P FOR DRUSSELL AND RRANGASWAMY

USUN FOR WOLFF/GERMAIN/SCHEDLBAUER

NSC FOR SHAPIRO, MCDERMOTT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER PINR UNSC MARR MOPS SY LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF COMMITS TO MORE
MANPADS DESTRUCTION

REF: 08 BEIRUT 1666

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Dennis Hadrick, Program Manager in the Department of State Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (WRA), received a verbal commitment from LAF Chief of Staff, Major General Shawki al-Masri, that the LAF will destroy 10 more Man Portable Air-Defense System (MANPADS) missiles stored in a LAF depot. U.S. Government contractor DynCorp Program Manager for Lebanon, Mark Craig, stated that DynCorp was prepared to assist Lebanese Mine Action Center with destruction of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in the Nahr al-Barid camp near Tripoli. End summary.

¶2. (C) On February 6, MG Shawki Al-Masri, LAF Chief of Staff, met Department of State Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement's Regional Program Manager, Dennis Hadrick, Embassy Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) Chief, LTC Andrew Leinberger, PolMilOff and DynCorp Program Manager, Mark Craig. LMAC Commander BG Mohammed Fehmi of the LAF joined Al-Masri at the meeting in Al-Masri's LAF HQ office.

COMMITMENT TO DESTROY 10 MANPADS

¶3. (C) Hadrick and EmbOffs told Al-Masri that with the continuing U.S. assistance to the LAF, it was important for the LAF to accelerate the destruction of MANPADS being stored at the Louezie depot. Craig, responsible for assisting the LAF with MANPADS destruction, noted that only two missiles were destroyed in 2008, (reftel) and it was important that at least 10 more needed demolition soon. Al-Masri declared several times there was "no problem" with destroying them soon. Leinberger emphasized the need for quick demolition by noting the need for storage space to hold incoming U.S.-supplied small-arms munitions arriving in April.

QUID PRO QUO

MANPADS NEED TO GO

¶4. (C) Fehmi and Craig both expressed the need for more LAF

officers to assist demining certification teams and to man the newly organized, LAF managed, Regional Mine Action Center (RMAC) in Nabatieh. (Note: The Lebanese Mine Action Center, LMAC, the overall national authority for demining operations in Lebanon, took over primary responsibility for managing clearance operations from the UN Mine Action Co-ordination Center, South Lebanon (MACC-SL) on 1 January. End Note.)

UNRWA CALL
FOR DEMINING ASSISTANCE

¶5. (C) Hadrick recounted a recent request made to him by Salvatore Lombardo, Director of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Lebanon, for assistance with disarming and disposing of UXO at the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian camp which were left from the 2007 conflict between the LAF and Fatah al-Islam extremists in the camp. Craig said he had the necessary equipment to do the work, his contract permitted for such operations, and he only needed LAF and LMAC support.

Al-Masri supported the effort at Nahr al-Barid, and expressed his gratitude to the U.S. for all its support of demining operations in Lebanon. Al-Masri concluded that the demining work in Lebanon, involving multiple NGOs, the UNMACC-SL and the LMAC, was a great example for the world to see how a humanitarian assistance program can be executed.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) After months of delay in destroying the MANPADS,

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Al-Masri's commitment to destroy ten was welcome news. We believe the LAF holds nearly 45-50 more MANPADS, so getting the ten missiles destroyed will be significant. The LAF is sensitive that destruction be done discreetly. The last demolition of one MANPAD prompted a story in a press outlet criticising the LAF for giving up air defense weaponry, which led the LAF to complain to us that we had released the information (we clarified that we had not). End comment.
SISON